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The Dark Side of Thought. The Body, the Unconscious and Madness in Hegel's Philosophy

Abstract: Is there a dark side to Hegelian philosophy? And if there is one, what is it exactly? This contribution aims to investigate those elements of Hegel's speculative contributions that cannot be traced back to the clarity of a narrow rationality, but that refer to another principle of reason, which includes the role of corporeity and the concepts of powerlessness and pain. As a result, the complexity of the Hegelian model of knowledge will be outlined. These aspects emphasize indeed the key role of elements of fragility and openness in the Hegelian system. A new reading of this latter, catering to contemporary needs as well, is therefore attempted.

1 A dark pit

There is a dark, nocturnal side concerning Hegel that has long remained silent. Maybe for the sake of discretion, Hegelian scholars have tried to obscure this aspect, preferring to show – also iconographically – the *ex-cathedra* philosopher, with his cold gaze and his ermine. This tradition begun very early on, with his pupil and biographer Karl Rosenkranz, who describes Hegel's life as “limpid”, “laborious”, “devoid of any glimmer of intrigue and secrets”, leading to the conclusion that his biography actually coincides with the story of his philosophy. Although Hegel was a careful phenomenologist of the spirit, scholars have portrayed him as a man without great moods or feelings – as if showing the fragility of his humanity could harm the integrity of the system. This choice reflects Hegel's own behavior, as he preferred to maintain a certain discretion in his private life, not handing over his feelings, except rarely, to letters and diaries. Within his system, though, the opposite is the case. Hegel dwells on the dark side of thought (see Magee 2013), on the role of negativity in the phenomenological itinerary, on nature's impotence as origin of the spirit; passion, impatience, and pain are key interpretative figures of human beings as well as of their thought.

The importance of this nocturnal side makes it clear that the dialectical process is never solved painlessly or definitively, and that tragedy stands at the origin of the ethical life. And indeed this choice is confirmed by Hegel's decision, in his anthropology – that is to say, the transition realm between the still

animal world (*Tierreich*) and the spiritual one – to place the origin of human beings in what he calls a “dark region”.

While reading once more Hegel’s remarks concerning the aurora of subjectivity, instead of a self-conscious subject, we find a series of perceptions, of sensations, of *Erlebnisse*, which show an originally confused state, in which the elements mix, overlap, and are far from resembling the clear and distinct ideas of Cartesian philosophy.

In the Jena system drafts, Hegel describes this early condition of the subject as a baroque painting:

in phantasmagoric representations it is night everywhere: here a bloody head suddenly shoots up and there another white shape, only to disappear as suddenly. We see this night when we look a human being in the eye, looking into a night which turns terrifying. [For from his eyes] the night of the world hangs out toward us (GW 8, p. 187; *HS*, p. 87).

At this stage, the subject is only a set of images and perceptions; content without an order, on which consciousness has not yet “operated”. Confrontation with this darkness is the condition of possibility for the living being to become human. The process of subjectification must come to terms with this condition of darkness and unconsciousness.

For Hegel, however, there is no precise moment in which the subject originates; what he describes is not an evolutionary process. All subjects go through this indeterminate state, in which the distinction between the Ego and the world has not yet emerged.

The starting point is therefore the absence of self-consciousness, the darkness. A multiplicity of confused contents inhabit the animal soul – which is the first configuration of the human – in a chaotic and indistinct way. They are kept in a secret treasure chest, which, in a note in the margins of the Jena draft, Hegel defines as the “night of self-preservation” (*die Nacht der Selbstbewahrung*). This night, Hegel says, is the human being. In it, objects are preserved without being brought into focus by representation. This human being is “the interior of nature”.

There is still no subject–object split, between the human being and the world. The Ego, the principle of distinction, has not yet intervened. At this stage there is no separation between internal and external; the subjects do not “recognize themselves” as such. This condition is the essence of the human: “The human being is this night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its simplicity – a wealth of infinitely many representations, images, none of which occur to it directly, and none of which are not present. This [is] the

night, the interior of [human] nature, existing here – *pure self* –” (GW 8, p. 187; HS, p. 87).

How to get out of this darkness? Based on what Hegel writes in Jena, the different and disordered contents are recognized by the subject through a process of idealization, by which they will become images. The images “belong” to the spirit; this latter possesses them; it is the lord, as Hegel writes. The first contact, albeit unconscious, with what is outside the pure self develops through a reduction of the real to the “ideal”. This amounts to saying that an action of *recollection-internalization* takes place: the subject in its auroral phase swallows the contents coming from outside, making the space-time multiplicity sink into unconscious storage. The engine of this process is the *Erinnerung*, recollection, but it occurs as *Ver-innerlichung*, internalization. The first meaning applied by Hegel to *Erinnerung* is therefore equal to the negative moment of dialectics: by sinking the single and multiple into its immediate existence, memory hides rather than producing (Fulda 1991, p. 329); it reduces the empirical and sensitive contents to *eidos*.

By virtue of the work of a preserving memory, the particular intuitions, linked to a specific time and space – but generally isolated from the external place, from the immediate complex in which they were located – acquire eternity and ubiquity. Hence the passage to the sign and then to language, which manifests itself as “the power to give names”.

A few years after Jena, Hegel will gather these analyses in the anthropology section of the *Encyclopedia*. This section had a late elaboration. Unlike the accounts on phenomenology and psychology, that on anthropology, which deals with the biological constitution of the subject, finds its coherent formulation only in the *Encyclopedia* of 1817.

The main difference between the Jena drafts and the *Encyclopedia* with reference to the process of subjectification is not only the way the subject brings order to the chaotic content, but also the idea of human being. In this new formulation, the unconscious still plays a key role, but it is worth remarking that this “dark region” is no longer the result of a reduction to images, but rather the product of a double movement, both active and passive, of the subject, at the center of which the corporeity is now placed.

2 Corporeity and subjectivation

In the anthropology section of the *Encyclopedia* the process of subjectification finds its origin in the sensitive and bodily dimension. Hegel starts from the consideration that everything that presents itself in spiritual consciousness and rea-

son has its source and origin (*Quelle und Ursprung*) (GW 20, § 400 Anm., p. 397; *PM*, p. 70) in sensation expressed through the body. At this point in Hegel's description, the soul is still linked to its naturalness, but the moment of separation occurs through the translation, in symbolic forms, performed by the body (gestures, voice, face, etc.).

What is at stake here is no longer, as in Jena, the power to reduce reality into images, the *Einbildungskraft*, but rather the need to express a form of knowledge that finds first and foremost in the body its instruments of expression. Corporeity therefore assumes a central function in the process of subjectification, a role it did not have before.

The whole section on anthropology in the *Encyclopaedia* articulates the initial, material, phase of the spirit, showing that, even before the subject acquires consciousness, it already exists as a feeling of self in the form of the unconscious and of corporeity. Now the exit from darkness is not only the work of memory, but also the work of the body: through the senses, the body introduces into the soul multiple and indistinct contents. Already at this stage we are witnessing an initial form of knowledge, although it is not conscious knowledge. The predisposition of human beings to perceive through their apparatus of organs makes them different from other animals and allows them to have already the first forms of elementary knowledge. As it becomes increasingly clear, the operation that the subject performs on this form of primitive knowledge, linked to the body, determines a transition from the natural realm to the spiritual one. The outcome of this process of establishing the *Anthropos* as such is the moment of habit, when nature becomes second nature and bodily and material stimuli take on a rational and mental meaning.¹

Within the framework of the soul linked to natural dispositions, to race, to temperament, a *Mitleben mit der Natur*, a close coexistence with nature is prominent, and the subjectivity of the sentient soul (*empfindende Seele*), to the extent that it only feels, is so immediate, so undeveloped, so undermining and differentiating, that it is not yet understood as a subjectivity as opposed to something objective.

Here the link to the body is immediate; and yet this very relationship of immediacy with nature, from which it takes its contents without being able to distinguish or recognize them, is the first step toward the human. The natural soul, in fact, begins to move away from indistinctness and to identify itself while establishing a close link to its own body. Although the soul is *forma corporis*, a

¹ On the comparison between Hegel's idea of "habit" and current brain research, and the idea of nature as intrinsically marked by difference, cf. Federica Pitillo, *infra*, pp. 51–60.

substantial form, Hegel also states that the body is *Bestimmung*, determination and destination of the soul. The body qualifies then as an unconscious reservoir, filled by sense system, through which the body receives impressions, contents, hence sensations, from the outside. These contents are then unconsciously kept within the body.

In the sentient soul then an unconscious relationship between external sensation and spiritual interiority is established. Through sensation and hence the body, the stimuli that come from outside are transformed and give rise to a “natural bodiliness”, (“*natürliche Leiblichkeit*”) (GW 20, § 401, p. 398; *PM*, p. 72), the first step toward the *principium individuationis*.² Whereas Hegel had understood in Jena that what comes from the outside is internalized through memory, now, in the mature system, a role of equal constitutive value is attributed to the function of the body.³ The process of somatization (*Verleiblichung*) allows the internal contents of the soul to flow outward. Reference should be made here to all of Hegel’s phenomenological accounts about modesty, fear, and spiritual feelings as finding expression through the body. At the same time, however, the body is also that through which the external world enters the subject and is then transformed into ideal images and contents.

3 From night to light: A precarious transition

While describing the transition from the unconscious to the conscious, Hegel mentions the sleep/waking relationship: waking up leads to the abandonment of the indistinct temporality of the night, and therefore to the distinction between past, present and future. In this respect, Hegel can claim that the day is younger than the night. Philosophy means to understand this game of light and shadow. Where darkness alone dominates there is still no humanity; this coincides with the *Lichtscheue*, “averse to light”, the light-shy (GW 11, p. 392; *SoL*, p. 488), or what is horrified by light, which is a pure coincidence of the self with itself, in other words, blind being, absolute necessity. Life as freedom begins

² Cf. Siep 1990, p. 221.

³ Laura Paulizzi’s contribution shows how the fusion and “apolitical” dimension of the mother–fetus relationship places the woman outside the scheme of recognition and therefore signals an aporia in the structuring of subjectivity, which in this way puts in crisis the ideal of universality of the scheme of recognition. Cf. Laura Paulizzi, *infra*, pp. 61–70.

with the swinging between darkness and light, full and empty.⁴ Only in this difference lies the possibility of a determined choice, namely in the need to draw oneself out of the *nächtliche Schacht*, from the dark pit. From this pit, like the Baron of Münchhausen, human beings seem to save themselves from drowning in a swamp by pulling their own hair out. Freedom can be attained by coming out of the abyss into which human beings are originally plunged. As already stated in the *Differenzschrift*, speculation deals with this unconscious dimension.

For in its higher synthesis of the conscious and the non-conscious, speculation also demands the nullification of consciousness itself. Reason thus drowns itself and its knowledge and its reflection of the absolute identity, in its own abyss: and in this night of mere reflection and of the calculating intellect, in this night which is the noonday of life, common sense and speculation can meet one another (GW 4, p. 23; *DFS*, p. 103).

This transition from night to day, however, can be dangerous. It entails the risk of madness, a risk that is only human. This risk arises from the possibility that the process of the structuring of subjectivity might suddenly stop, that something might go wrong. Madness, which we can define as a “disease of dialectics”, is the inability of the law par excellence, that is, the dialectics, to reach its fulfillment. It thus shows in negative relief subjectivity and its weakness. In the margins of the Jena drafts, Hegel adds a description of the emergence of subjectivity: “The power to draw the images out of this night, or to let them sink” (GW 8, p. 187, my translation).⁵

The transition from darkness to light cannot be guaranteed. The power of thought is possibility: bringing these images to light, determining the birth of the subject, or surrendering to oneself, letting those images remain shrouded in darkness. This latter option is madness. Faced with this possibility are human beings at their origin, always exposed to the risk of insanity.⁶ The lengthy

⁴ The contribution of Carmen Belmonte investigates the question whether through Hegel’s thought it is possible to reflect on the existence of a universal human freedom well beyond sexual and racial distinctions. See Carmen Belmonte, *infra*, pp. 71–78.

⁵ In the note inserted in the text by Hoffmeister, Hegel writes: “Macht aus dieser Nacht die Bilder hervorzuziehen, oder sie hinunterfallen zu lassen –”.

⁶ See the contribution of Rossella Bonito Oliva, which combines the nocturnal and unconscious side with the “magical” dimension. Through this point of view, the author namely before focuses on a different relationship between the sexes and on the role on the feminine in Hegel’s thought. Although Sophocles’ *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* recalls the classic patriarchal and masculine scheme, Bonito Oliva argues that the *ghenos* becomes for Hegel “condition of the possibility of plural and multiple figures of a spiritual existence” (*infra*, pp. 37–50). The magical world, as Hegel calls the deep bond that unifies the mother to her womb, as Bonito Oliva highlights, shows the role of the unconscious, in the constitution of identity in Hegel’s thought.

analysis that Hegel devotes in his lectures to madness – reported as annotations to the *Encyclopedia* – lets us grasp the importance of this aspect which, as is well known, touched him very closely.⁷

The deterioration of the mental health of Hölderlin, who, starting in 1802, began exhibiting the symptoms of a psychiatric disorder, and in 1807 was hospitalized in the clinic of Professor Ferdinand Autenrieth in Tübingen;⁸ the illness of Hegel's son Ludwig and of his sister, Christiane⁹, locked up in the Zweifalten asylum in 1820, where she took her own life a year later, just a few months after the death of her brother Georg; the crisis of hypochondria that Hegel himself experienced in the years he spent in Nuremberg in the precariousness of a career in the balance, among economic difficulties and emotional instability; all these experiences show Hegel's familiarity with the universe of madness. And maybe this is why he always describes insanity with great sensitivity. In his letter of May, 27th 1810, replying to Windischmann who complained that he was in a condition of restlessness and instability because of his studies on magic, Hegel states that he is familiar with this disorientation:

7 As Rosenkranz added, Hegel is interested in mental illness not only due to his personal experience, but because it was also the problem of his time (Engelhardt 1991). See Rosenkranz 1844. Rosenkranz traces Hegel's interest in irrational and unconscious phenomena back to his stay in Nuremberg, also in connection with Schubert's studies on madness as the loss of "spiritual receptivity" and the relapse into the material sphere. Moving from a Neo-Platonic conception, for which the body presents itself as a prison of the soul, Schubert recognizes the importance of the sphere of the unconscious and re-evaluates the language of dreams as a ciphered language, which is able to embrace more things, precisely because it is not subject to the limitations of time. See Schubert 1968.

8 Hegel probably felt the need to protect himself from the pain of his dearest friend's madness. In June 1803, Schelling met Hölderlin and worried about his health. He begged Hegel to host him in Jena, informing him that the poet was absent, he only translated from Greek, and he completely neglected his personal care; and although his speeches were still consistent, he had the attitude of a madman. Hegel's answer is kind: "Even more unexpected [was] Hölderlin's appearance in Swabia. And in what shape! You are certainly right that he will not be able to recuperate there. Yet, what is more, he is beyond the point where Jena can have a positive effect on a person. And the question now is whether, given his condition, rest will suffice for him to recuperate on his own. I hope that he still places a certain confidence in me as he used to do, and perhaps this will be capable of having some effect on him if he comes here" (*Briefe I*, p. 74; *Letters*, p. 66). Schelling and Sinclair often made remarks in their letters to Hegel about their friend's health; Hegel reacted to these solicitations only in 1807, and for the last time, in a letter to Sinclair. We do not have Hegel's letter, but it is clear from Sinclair's reply that there had been a request from Hegel to be informed about Hölderlin's conditions.

9 On the figure of Christiane Hegel, cf. Kriegel 2010; Francesca Iannelli, *infra*, pp. 239–254.

this descent into dark regions where nothing is revealed as fixed, definite, and certain; where glimmerings of light flash everywhere but, flanked by abysses, are rather darkened in their brightness and led astray by the environment, casting false reflections far more than illumination. Each onset of a new path breaks off again and ends in the indeterminable, losing itself, wresting us away from our purpose and direction (Hegel to Windischmann, Hegel 1969, p. 314; *Letters*, p. 561).

To encourage his colleague, Hegel confesses that he too lived in this state of soul – or, as he makes clear shortly afterwards, in this state of reason. In the *Encyclopedia* he theorizes that madness is a state in which reason lives; reason does not abandon the mentally ill. Hegel's letter continues:

For a few years I suffered from this hypochondria to the point of exhaustion. Everybody probably has such a turning point in his life, the nocturnal point of the contraction of his essence in which he is forced through a narrow passage by which his confidence in himself and everyday life grows in strength and assurance – unless he has rendered himself incapable of being fulfilled by everyday life, in which case he is confirmed in an inner, nobler existence (Hegel 1969, p. 314; *Letters*, p. 561).¹⁰

Hegel therefore places madness in that space between the conscious and the unconscious, from which subjectivity springs; in this sense the chapter on Anthropology, where the philosopher treats the subject of madness, refers to a border-space. The entire chapter on Anthropology is presented as a moment of transition: from nature to spirit. The mentally ill are incapable of controlling the abyss of sensations and intuitions that pass through them, which come from their body and from the outside world.¹¹ Thus madness presents itself as a spatial and temporal disease. Spatiality is spoiled by the inability to relate physical-

10 Hegel's reply follows Windischmann's letter of April, 27th 1810, in which the scientist told him about his investigations into the evolution of the human spirit and his aim of investigating all forms of this evolution: "beginning with the first and full magical power of the Impenetrable – and of Nature surging forth everywhere – over man, proceeding through the isolation and interlocking of moments, and ending with the penetration, illumination, and complete magical power of Spirit itself, which dissipates all magical incantation and constitutes the clarity and freedom of life itself". In the same letter Windischmann also confessed to him the difficulties and his terrible moods made worse by his research into magic: "For about two weeks I have in fact found myself in the worst of mental states. It was precipitated by an attack almost resembling apoplexy. My situation, which in any case was already painful, thus came to weigh on me like a rock on the chest. A profound hypochondria and semiparalysis had taken hold of me, and everything I do and write disgusts me" (Hegel 1969, p. 306; *Letters*, p. 559). The work to which Windischmann refers will then be published in 1813 (Windischmann 1813).

11 On the role of corporeity in the emergence of madness, see Mariannina Failla, *infra*, pp. 103–113.

ly, bodily, to the world. The subject seems to be unable to untangle the “rhapsody of perceptions” that come from outside, so one remains entangled, involved, in a particular determination, giving in to a permanent dystonia, to the *verrücken* – a term that in German indicates displacement, even spatial: *Verrücktheit*, derangement, dislocation, displacement; to the loss, even physical, of self-perception (see GW 20, § 408, p. 412; *PM*, p. 115).

But madness is also a disease related to temporality. Temporality is broken in the inability of the subject to establish a continuity between past and present – a disease of memory. In madness – as the long pages of the *Psychology*, in the last section of the *Encyclopedia* dedicated to memory and remembrance, will show – the process of conscious temporalization is lost. Madness is the inability to reactivate the *nächtlichen Schacht*, the dark pit, the horror in face of this enormous information, the anchorage to a single moment in the past: the subject becomes incapable of finding itself in the present, where one feels attracted and rejected at the same time.

In madness, the human being carries out a reactivation of the soul in the time of consciousness, but in an anachronistic and deceptive way. This process, Hegel explains, can occur in the formation of the spirit. Therefore, it is not a question of understanding how the spirit plunges into madness, but rather of why the soul in its path is unable to rise beyond the unconscious, to overcome the temptation of madness. In mental illness, human beings are unable to make their original weakness productive: their awakening does not correspond to the beginning of time and the world of the spirit (Bonito Oliva 1995, p. 171). The coherent path that makes every life a peculiarly human life is interrupted (Bonito Oliva, 2008, p. 145; Anzalone 2014, pp. 108 ff.). Unconsciousness and madness are the moments in which this darkness manifests itself (see Berthold-Bond 1991; Mills 2002; Ciavatta 2010) and takes over in triumph.

4 A madness of reason?

Madness is not an abstract loss of reason; just as, Hegel explains, physical illness is not the total loss of health, but it is precisely the condition of contradiction. While healthy subjects, through ideality, do not lose the sense of the whole of their subjectivity and consider their individual world as an ordered totality, within which they place the contents that come from their corporeity, mentally ill persons enter into a real contradiction between the whole systematized in their consciousness, and a particular determination that is fixed in them and

that they can no longer place and order within their world, nor submit to themselves as subjects (see Wolff 1991).¹² Madness breaks out

when it [the human being, SA] remains ensnared in a particular determinacy, it fails to assign that content the intelligible place and the subordinate position belonging to it in the individual world-system which a subject is. In this way the subject finds itself in the contradiction between its totality systematized in its consciousness, and the particular determinacy in that consciousness, which is not pliable and integrated into an overarching order. This is derangement (GW 20, § 408, p. 412; *PM*, pp. 114–115).

Madness is therefore the extreme moment of contradiction from which human beings can arise or in which they can succumb. In madness two personalities live together at the same time, the rational one and the particular. They know each other. Unlike what happens in the relationship between sleep and wakefulness, the subject is unable to remove this duplicity of personalities. The relationship between these two opposites gives rise to an only apparent dialectic, in which the natural, dark element of the soul ends up prevailing.

Unlike somnambulism, in which the two personalities do not know about each other, in madness next to the subjective reality there is also the objective one, but as two separate worlds that cannot integrate. This coexistence of a subjective and an objective sphere, explains why the mentally ill know that they are in the asylum and can perform certain tasks and activities. In madness the greatest fracture is experienced.¹³

In clarifying what happens in madness, Hegel uses as an example precisely the error of naive idealism, presenting it as a kind of philosophical “madness”, where an attempt is made to give absolute validity to subjective content. Madness therefore consists in holding on as firm and true to a subjective representation that contradicts reality.¹⁴

This dominion of the interior over the exterior can be at the origin of mental illness. The risk lies not only in the isolation and prevalence of a single aspect,

¹² Giovanni Andreozzi analyzes the relationship between madness and inter-subjectivity. Starting from Hegel’s *Anthropology*, the author aims to show how, through madness, Hegel advocates the need to recognize the immanent and inter-subjective relationship that constitutes the subject. Cf. Giovanni Andreozzi, *infra*, pp. 79–89.

¹³ An original approach to madness is presented by Caterina Maurer (*infra*, pp. 115–125), to show how Hegel does not consider the so-called emotional dimension as a threat to mental health, but rather as indispensable for the subject to act, decide, know and relate to the outside world.

¹⁴ The incorrigibility of one’s own conviction, even in the face of contradicting evidence, will represent one of the substantial aspects in the definition of the schizophrenic delirium in the twentieth century. See American Psychiatric Association 2013.

but also in the inability of the soul to regulate its relationship with the outside world. Mental illness, Hegel clarifies, is that condition in which individuals relate with no mediation to concrete content, while their weighted consciousness of themselves and of the intellectual connection with the world forms a different state (see GW 20, § 406, p. 409f.; *PM*, p. 95f.). This condition, we would say today, is schizophrenia, in which between the world and the subject there is no effective relationship of exchange.

The question arises, then, what is the relationship, according to Hegel, between madness and normality? There seems to be here a significant difference between Kant and Hegel. For Kant, mental illness is a “disorder and deviation from the rule of the use of reason” (AA 7, p. 216, transl. 2007, 321). The only general character of alienation is the loss of common sense (*sensus communis*), the *Gemeinsinn*, and the appearance of a logical singularity (*sensus privatus*), the *Eigensinn* (AA 7, p. 219): for example, a man sees a burning light on his table in broad daylight, while another man beside him does not see it, or he hears a voice that no one else perceives. The madman is excluded from the possibility of thinking according to the laws of experience. Kant is guided by a *logic of otherness*:

The more the madman separates himself from the general rules of thought until he enjoys a particular rule for his thinking, the more he is really mad. In essence, alienation implies a hermetic withdrawal in oneself, which does not accept nuances in its principle. Reason, for Kant, is like reason itself, a pure form to which objects can correspond. Reason is a viewpoint on objects, but it is a viewpoint radically cut off from the ‘true knowledge of things’ (Swain 1997, p. 5; AA 7, p. 220).

Hegel’s discourse contrasts with that of Kant. For Hegel, madness is not the loss of reason. This is why the mentally ill know that they are in a madhouse; they know their guardians; they know, concerning to their companions, that they too are ill. They joke among themselves about their madness; they are employed in all kinds of services, and sometimes they are also made guardians. If it is true that there are two personalities in the insane, the two personalities do not constitute two states, but are both in the same state, in a way that these two personalities who deny each other touch and know each other. “He knows himself divided, he feels his division, according to this one and only subject he has left!” (Swain 1997, p. 15). Hegel’s position shows proximity to Pinel.¹⁵

¹⁵ Foucault places Pinel’s position, as well as that of Hegel, within an anthropological perspective that instead of freeing human beings, chains them to their nature in a deterministic way. As Foucault states: the mentally ill is “libre d’abandonner sa liberté et [de] s’enchaîner à la folie”

Pinel recognizes similarity beyond difference – a similarity that includes differences, and that allows him to recognize “le fou” as a human being. The madman ceases to be demonic. Sure, they are human beings. But they are special people, sick people. Mad people are recognized in their humanity, and that is a very big step. They are “sick” humans, who need to be “treated”. The recognition of the madman’s humanity comes at the price of medicalization.

A similar approach can be found in Hegel. He considers *Wahnsinn* (*delirium*) the highest form of madness. This form is characterized by the awareness of one’s split, nevertheless the sick person is unable to overcome their subjective representation and tries in every way to make the actual reality coincide with it. The therapy relies on the presence of the spirit, of a residual rationality, which can be supported by physical and psychic treatment – on this point Hegel even echoes Pinel’s theories¹⁶. The patient must in any case be treated as a rational being.¹⁷

Hence this state is a breakdown and distress within the mind itself. – The genuine psychological treatment therefore keeps firmly in view the fact that derangement is not an abstract loss of reason, whether in respect of intelligence or of the will and its responsibility, but only derangement, only a contradiction within the reason that is still present (GW 20, § 408, p. 414; *PM*, p. 115).

(Foucault 1961, p. 614). For an analysis of the relationship between Hegel and Foucault and possible affinities, see Alice Giuliani’s paper, *infra*, pp. 127–137. In this regard, we can bring Hegel’s discourse closer to that of Freud, who states: “Even when it comes to states as far removed from the reality of the outside world as confused hallucinatory states (amentia), the sick, once cured, declare that, in a corner of their mind, according to their expression, a normal person had kept himself hidden, letting himself unfold before them, like a disinterested observer [...] We can probably admit that what happens in all similar states is a psychic split. Instead of a psychic attitude, there are two; one, the normal one, takes into account reality while the other, under the influence of impulses, detaches the ego from the latter. The two attitudes coexist, but the result depends on their relative powers” (Freud 1924, p. 77).

16 Moral treatment is not, as Foucault might suggest, a treatment through morality, the imposition of a certain morality, but rather a treatment through words. Pinel’s successors will say that for this treatment to be effective it will be necessary to organize an adequate space. These two criteria of treatment and the search for an adequate organization of space are characteristics that can serve to distinguish institutional psychotherapy from classical psychiatric practice, on Hegel and Pinel, cf. Giulia Battistoni, *infra*, pp. 91–101.

17 On the relationship between philosophy and madness, cf. Feloj/Giargia 2012. On the problem of mental illness starting from the experiments in French and English institutes and their legacy in Germany, starting from Reil’s inquiries, see Poggi 2000, in particular chapter XI, pp. 545–608. In the debate between Reil, Steffens, and Heinroth, one finds many aspects also included in Hegel’s accounts. On the role of reason to overcome mental illness, see Heinroth 1818.

In madness human beings can at any moment lose the path of subjectification, stopping somewhere or getting lost. This means that there is no sure foothold from which to begin the process of subjectification.

The choice to start from this nocturnal side in Hegel, as well as to choose darkness as a *leitmotiv*, allows us to apply a new perspective to Hegel's philosophy and his dialectical process, and ultimately see how the dark dimension is not an element that disappears once and for all in the constitution of the subject, but is rather a persisting aspect in the process of subjectification. The bodily relationship between mother and child, the contradiction that occurs in madness, the role of the unconscious, all these issues and their investigation will allow us to create a different atmosphere around Hegelian philosophy and to re-evaluate its real, concrete, corporeal dimension.

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